



U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

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Air Station Annette, Alaska



Original Location: Annette Island, Alaska

Current Location: Sitka, Alaska

Date of Commission: 14 March 1944

Fate: Transferred to Sitka, 1977

Historical Remarks:

1944 – Air Detachment Annette Island Alaska Established:



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In the years leading up to World War II the thought was that any major operations by an enemy in the Alaska-Aleutian area was highly improbable. By April of 1940 the anxiety level had increased and it was concluded that there was a need for development of permanent installations at Kodiak, Sitka, Unalaska, Anchorage, and Fairbanks. Traffic through ports on the Pacific coast became extremely heavy. At Seattle in particular, facilities were stretched to their limits, and the American forces began discussions with Canada for using Canadian ports for shipment of troops and materials to Alaska. The build-up also required improved air service between the states and Alaska. In order to provide for larger and faster aircraft an airport with runways was needed as a refueling station between Seattle and Anchorage. Annette Island, a flat boggy

island of about ten square miles, located twenty-five miles south of Ketchikan, was chosen as the site for a ten-thousand-foot runway. Construction started in the fall of 1940 and the first aircraft landed on the not-quite- complete runway in September of 1941. An important American sub-embarkation port and ammunition dump had been opened at the port of Prince Rupert Canada in April 1942 but Canada's ability to defend it against attack was very limited. The air base at Annette provided a location for defensive air support. Canada offered to supply a squadron of fighters to Annette, and by May 5, 1942, No. 115 (Fighter) Squadron was in place, becoming the first Canadian force ever based in U.S. territory to directly assist in American defense.

Annette Island became a transit base for aircraft being relocated throughout Alaska. On June 3, 1942, a huge carrier-based Japanese force attacked Dutch Harbor, and resulted in a huge increase in activity. Air traffic at the Annette base became quite heavy at times, with C-47 transports, Canadian PBY-5 Cansos, Bristol Bolingbroke bombers, Norsemen utility aircraft, and P-40 fighters.

Coast Guard Air Station Annette was located on Annette Island, Alaska. Flight operations began on 14 March 1944 with a local area familiarization flight. The pilot and senior officer was LCDR J. J. McCue, USCG. The personnel compliment consisted of LCDR McCue, Henry "Hank" J. Pfeiffer, an aviation pilot, and five enlisted crewmembers. One aircraft, Grumman JRF No. 228 was assigned. Personnel were housed in the Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) quonsets. The CAA provided hangar and office space. On June 26 1946, a second JRF was received along with an



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additional pilot and a few additional crewmen. A PBY-5AG was added in November 1947 and more personnel were assigned, however the PBY aircraft operations were discontinued in March 1948.

The detachment continued operating JRFs until replaced by UF-1G aircraft in the fall of 1952. At the time, the aircraft and personnel were augmented by the Military Readiness program. On 1 April 1956 the hangar was transferred from the Department of Commerce to the Coast Guard, under the Treasury Department. FAA and Weather Bureau occupied subleased office spaces from the Coast Guard. Housing conditions improved when the combination Bachelor Officer and Bachelor Enlisted Quarters were opened on 6 May 1961 and families began moving into Roland Village in March 1965. In 1964 the aircraft compliment included two HH52A helicopters and three HU16E aircraft. In 1966 one HU-16E was replaced with a third HH-52A. In 1972 a program was begun which, now completed replaced both the HU-16E and HH-52A with the larger and more modern HH-3F helicopter.

The station was relocated to Sitka, Alaska in 1977, which was more centrally located in the Southeastern Alaska operating area.

Historic Photo Gallery

Unless otherwise indicated all photos are official U.S. Coast Guard photographs. Any original caption information is included in the text beneath each photo, along with a date, if known. Click on the thumbnail to access a 300 dpi image.



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Original photo caption: "USCG Air Station Annette Isl., Alaska inspection tour of Commandant -- Admiral Roland speaking on field on his arrival."; photo dated 28 July 1965; Photo No. CPI-072865-10; photo by PH1 Nicols.



Original photo caption: "USCG Air Station Annette Isl., Alaska, Inspection tour Admiral E. J. Roland, USCG, commandant, dedicating new family quarters. Admiral Roland inspecting crew here."; photo dated 28 July 1965; Photo No. CPI-072865-08; photo by PH1 Nicols.



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Original photo caption: "USCG Air Station, Annette Isl., Alaska, Inspection -- Admiral E. J. Roland, USCG, Commandant, dedicating new family quarters."; photo dated 28 July 1965; Photo No. CPI-072865-04; photo by PH1 Nicols.



No caption/date/photo number; photographer unknown. Aerial view of Air Station Annette.



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Historical Sources:

Air Station Files, U. S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Arthur Percy. *A History of U. S. Coast Guard Aviation*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1989.
